STATEMENT OF

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COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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The President's FY 2007 budget request reflects several pressing national priorities, including the continuing war on terrorism, facilitating economic stimulus, and maintaining fiscal responsibility. The Congress will have many difficult choices to make in order to balance these priorities, control the deficit and implement our considerable domestic spending commitments.

In making these choices, we must not overlook the fact that scientific research and development underpins all of these priorities. Scientific research and development forms the foundation of increased innovation, economic vitality and national security. Scientific research is an investment that promises, and has historically delivered, significant returns on that investment.

I strongly support the President's call to maintain the competitive ability of the United States in an increasingly innovative world economy. His American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) requests focused funding on areas that will improve STEM education and promote domestic innovation and economic productivity.

Our investment in physical science research has been slipping, and our overall national investment in research and development is at a rate much slower when compared to other growing economies. Furthermore, Congress has actually reduced the appropriated funds for the physical sciences in recent years, compared to the request.

I want to particularly emphasize three science research and development programs that have garnered the attention of the President and deserve Congress' utmost attention: the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Energy's Office of Science.

I am pleased that the budget request includes $467 for the core NIST laboratory programs and facilities in FY07, a 17 percent increase over FY06 enacted. This increase includes $72 million for new research initiatives and enhancements to NIST's user facilities. I believe it is very important to support this request, as it represents a significant yet sensible investment in programs that give the U.S. a significant head start in several fields of emerging technology in quantum physics and nanotechnology that will ultimately have great economic impacts.

While I am pleased that the President has included NIST labs in his ACI, I am very concerned about other manufacturing programs at NIST. The President's FY 2007 budget request cuts the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program by over 50 percent to $46 million. I have worked very hard over the years to help my colleagues in Congress understand that MEP is vital to retaining American competitiveness and American jobs, and I believe they appreciate the value of this program. Furthermore, I continue to support the Advanced Technology Program (ATP) and am disappointed that the Administration has again included no funds for the program in the budget request. ATP is NIST's only extramural research grant program, funding high-risk, high-return technology research and development on a cost-shared basis with U.S. industry, and as such can make a major contribution to the American Competitiveness Initiative.

The NSF's FY 2007 budget request of $6.0 billion is an 8 percent increase over FY 2006 appropriations, the first year in a ten-year commitment to double its budget. This marks a shift from previous budget requests, as the NSF budget has been stagnant in recent years, and even cut in FY 2005. The request is still well below the authorized funding level necessary to complete the commitment Congress made to double NSF funding in 2002, but I am confident that this request is the start of a new doubling path that we can follow.

While I am heartened by the commitment the Administration's request shows for the fundamental research budget at NSF, I would like to register my concern that the education programs at the Foundation have not been included in the ACI. NSF is the primary federal supporter of science and math education; it underwrites the development of the next generation of scientists and engineers. In the FY 2007 budget request, many of the education programs at the K-12 and undergraduate level will be cut. I am particularly concerned about the trend of the current budget request that restructures the Education and Human Resources (EHR) budget at the Foundation and eliminates three programs critical to our nation, including the Math and Science Partnership program. These budget choices seriously undercut the ACI's goals to improve math and science education and to ensure that America has an educated workforce capable of competing in the global economy.

The Department of Energy's Office of Science funds 40 percent of our nation's physical science research. To maintain our economic, technical, and military pre-eminence, the federal government must continue to support research in alternative energy sources, nanotechnology and supercomputing. I am pleased that the Office of Science is included in the President's ACI and that the FY 2007 budget request for the Office of Science is $4.1 billion – an increase of 14 percent from the FY 2006 enacted level. Last year the Office endured significant cuts that, in part, led to layoffs and the delay of many important instruments. As part of the American Competitiveness Initiative, the Office of Science is not only important to the future of U.S. science, but also our competitiveness and energy security.

FY 2007 will be another tough budget year. Significant sacrifices and compromises in spending must be made. We must not, however, sacrifice the research and education which future generations will need to ensure their economic prosperity and domestic security. I look forward to working with my colleagues and the witnesses testifying today to bolster American research and education.